

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts General laws, Chapter 30A, Section 20, notice is hereby given for the following meeting of the:

***Arlington School Committee
Curriculum Instruction Accountability and Assessment
Tuesday, October 7, 2025
3:30 PM***

In Person:

*Arlington Public Schools District Office
14 Mill Brook Drive
2nd Floor, Superintendent's Office
Arlington, MA 02476*

Via Zoom:

Zoom link

Open Meeting

Update on DCAP/MTSS Plan

- *MTSS in APS*

School Quality Plan-Update on Presentation Plan

Old Business

New Business

Adjournment (L. Exton)

The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Stated times and time amounts, listed in parenthesis, are the estimated amount of time for that particular agenda item. Actual times may be shorter or longer depending on the time needed to fully explore the topic.

Massachusetts law requires all open session meetings of public bodies to be accessible to members of the public, including those with disabilities. If you need reasonable accommodations in order to participate in the meeting, contact the Administrative Assistant to the Arlington School Committee Liz Diggins at ediggins@arlington.k12.ma.us.



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Meeting Location - Hybrid

Summary:

In Person:

Arlington Public Schools District Office
14 Mill Brook Drive
2nd Floor, Superintendent's Office
Arlington, MA 02476

Via Zoom:

-
Zoom link

-



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Open Meeting



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Update on DCAP/MTSS Plan

Summary:

- MTSS in APS

ATTACHMENTS:

	Type	File Name	Description
▢	Presentation	MTSS_in_APS.pdf	MTSS in APS

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



Dr. Liz Homan, Superintendent
Dr. Mona Ford Walker, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching & Learning
Bishop & Peirce Elementary Schools
October 1, 2025

Agenda



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Education That Empowers

10 min	Opener: What do we know about MTSS?
15 min	Framing: MTSS and APS
15 min	What is MTSS? ● Not a specific place or person ● Structures that are part of MTSS ● MTSS Supports for Educators
5 min	Closing

Opener

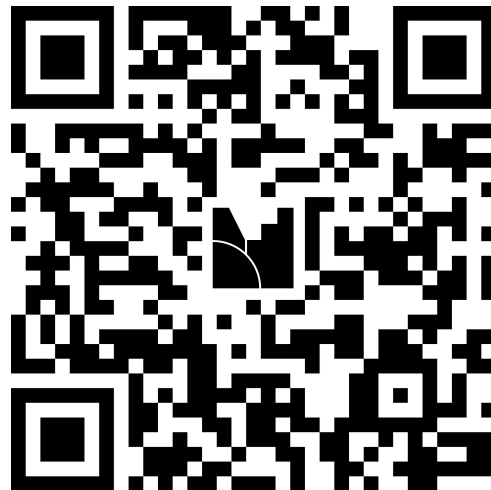


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Education That Empowers

Answer the following questions by scanning the QR code with your phone and/or going to the link and entering the code:

- What do you know about MTSS?
- What questions do you have about MTSS?

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APS Strategic Priorities: The APS Strategic Plan identifies four priorities that were developed to focus the work of APS in service of the vision and mission. Each of the twelve initiatives is aligned to one of the four strategic priorities.

Strategic Priority 1: Ensuring Equity and Excellence

Initiative 1.1: Instructional Vision
Initiative 1.2: Student Belonging and Adult Support
Initiative 1.3: Implementing MTSS

Strategic Priority 2: Valuing All Staff

Initiative 2.1: Pathway Programs
Initiative 2.2: Reimagined Professional Development
Initiative 2.3: Compensation

Strategic Priority 3: Improving Infrastructure, Operations, and Sustainability

Initiative 3.1: Inclusive and Modern Schools
Initiative 3.2: Healthy Lunch for All
Initiative 3.3: Enhanced Facilities Stewardship

Strategic Priority 4: Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

Initiative 4.1: Before and After Care
Initiative 4.2: Welcome Center and Registration
Initiative 4.3: Communication and Partnership

A Few Notes about Achievement Gaps

..what you pay attention to grows...

*so don't pay attention to
achievement gaps.*



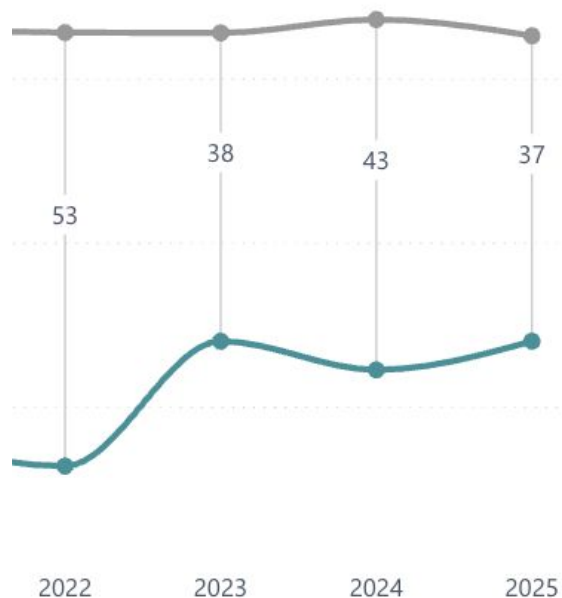
*(except for the next
10 minutes or so)*

A Few Notes about Achievement Gaps Year-over-Year Trends

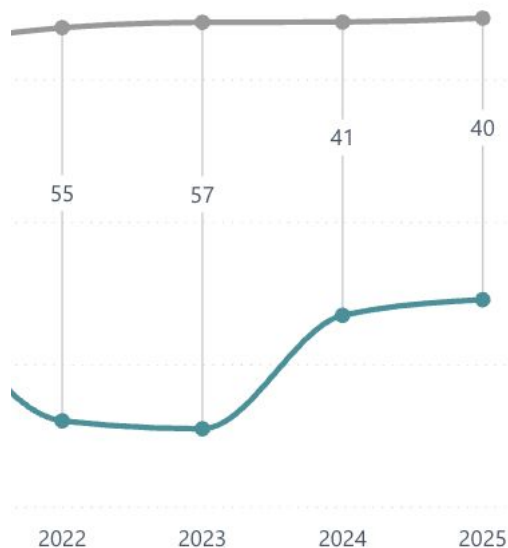


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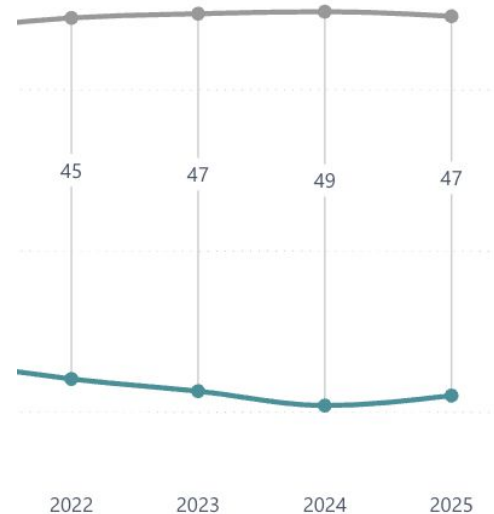
AHS ELA for Ss w/IEPs



Dallin ELA for Ss w/IEPs



Elem ELA for Ss w/IEPs



A Few Notes about Achievement Gaps Cohort Trends



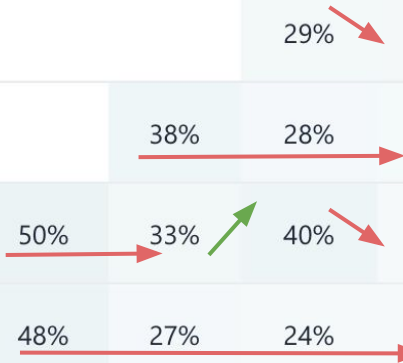
Students w/o IEPs, Cohort, ELA

	SY-20-21	SY-21-22	SY-22-23	SY-23-24	SY-24-25
Current 4th Graders					75%
Current 5th Graders				75%	77%
Current 6th Graders			75%	71%	75%
Current 7th Graders		80%	73%	76%	77%
Current 8th Graders	85%	74%	82%	77%	86%
Current 9th Graders	77%	71%	78%	81%	92%



Students w/IEPs, Cohort, ELA

	SY-20-21	SY-21-22	SY-22-23	SY-23-24	SY-24-25
Current 4th Graders					29%
Current 5th Graders				27%	29% 
Current 6th Graders			29%	28%	32% 
Current 7th Graders		38%	28%	26%	39% 
Current 8th Graders	50%	33%	40%	24%	36% 
Current 9th Graders	48%	27%	24%	24%	38% 



A Few Notes about Achievement Gaps



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Somehow, APS realized gains for every single student cohort for students with IEPs in ELA Grades 3-8 from 2024 to 2025...

***But how?!
Discuss with a neighbor.***

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Students w/IEPs, Cohort, ELA

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APS Core Principles of Professional Learning to enable Instructional Equity:



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Principle 1: Instructional equity means that ALL students have opportunities to access tasks aligned with grade-level standards through rigorous, asset-based, and inclusive instruction.

Principle 2: Job-embedded collaborative time like ACE, CPT, LC, SST, and other meetings should focus on students' progress towards and opportunities to access grade-level work, and should use student work, assessments, observations, and the shared expertise of colleagues to guide adjustments to instruction and programming accordingly.

Principle 3: Professional Learning at the school, department, or district level should provide educators with the information, pedagogical tools, and practices aligned with educators' current expertise and learning needs that will enable them to ensure instructional equity in their roles, settings, and content areas.

APS Core Principles of Professional Learning to enable Instructional Equity:



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DRIVER 1

Universal High-Quality Instruction



Schools have strong systems and adult practices that ensure consistent delivery of high-quality, grade-level instruction at scale, for all learners. This includes instruction that promotes school belonging, academic success, social-emotional and behavioral development, and health and wellbeing.



Principle 1: Instructional equity means that ALL students have opportunities to access tasks aligned with grade-level standards through rigorous, asset-based, and inclusive instruction.

DRIVER 2

Data-Driven Decisions



Comprehensive screening and assessment, coupled with regular progress monitoring, inform individual student support, adjustments, and system-wide priorities and practices.

DRIVER 3

Team-Driven Leadership



Staff, families, and students collaborate to understand individual student needs and collectively drive the development and improvement of effective tiered supports and the multi-tiered system overall. Collaborative processes and structures are clearly articulated.



Principle 2: *Job-embedded collaborative time like ACE, CPT, LC, SST, and other meetings should focus on students' progress towards and opportunities to access grade-level work, and should use student work, assessments, observations, and the shared expertise of colleagues to guide adjustments to instruction and programming accordingly.*

DRIVER 4

Evidence-Based Tiered Supports



Tier 2 and 3 supports are aligned with and reinforce Tier 1, build on each other, and are appropriately integrated across domains based on student strengths and needs. Practices and interventions at every tier are selected because they have a proven impact on the students being served.

DRIVER 5

Strategic Resource Alignment



Staff, funding, time/scheduling, professional learning, and other resources are effectively used and equitably distributed to deliver the supports students need.



Principle 3: Professional Learning at the school, department, or district level should provide educators with the information, pedagogical tools, and practices aligned with educators' current expertise and learning needs that will enable them to ensure instructional equity in their roles, settings, and content areas.

- + *Resources (staff & stuff!)*
- + *Student and Staff Schedules*
- + *Human and System Capacity*

Principle 1: Instructional equity means that **ALL students have opportunities to access tasks aligned with grade-level standards** through rigorous, asset-based, and inclusive instruction.

What this ***is not*** asking you to do:

- Be inflexible to emergent student needs
- Teach in lockstep with your colleague, or from a script
- Teach to (or about) the test
- Panic because you can't get through the curriculum before April (***standards*** are not the same as ***testing!***)
- Take the same field trip to the bird sanctuary for the entire district in 1st grade (because it's May and we're still studying birds for some reason)

Principle 1: Instructional equity means that **ALL students have opportunities to access tasks aligned with grade-level standards** through rigorous, asset-based, and inclusive instruction.

What this **is** asking you to do:

- Support and incorporate systems and practices that provide as many opportunities as possible for all students to experience success in an environment where grade-level learning is happening.
- Deeply know the **standards** of your grade level.
- Ensure the **tasks you give students** meet the cognitive demand required by the standard.
- Design and adjust lessons and tasks in ways that give all students a “way in” to the grade-level work **without modifying the content** (why that last part?)

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Grade 1 Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI.1. Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text

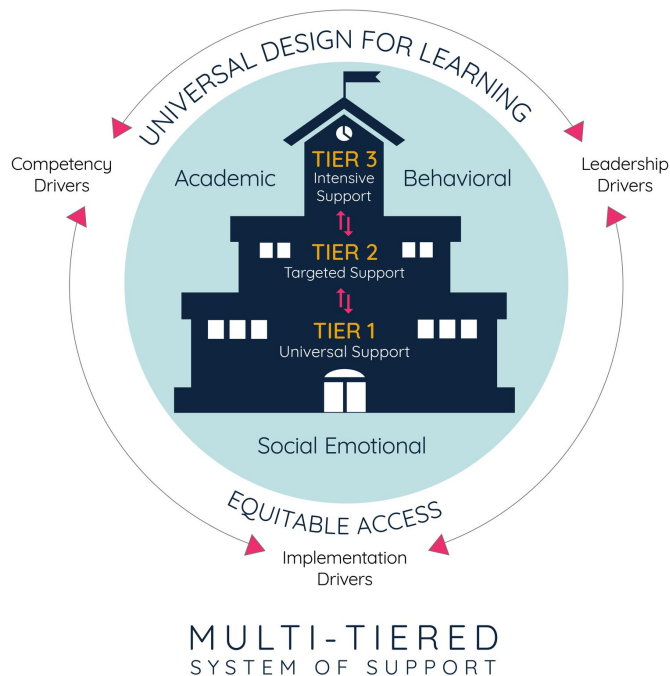
Key Components of MTSS



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What is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and why is it important?

The **Drivers** create a system that allows for the Universal Design of Academic, Behavior SEL within Tier 1 and a data culture so Tier 2 and 3 services can be provided. Drivers can be thought of as the environmental factors that make creating the MTSS system possible!



Key Components of MTSS



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What is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?

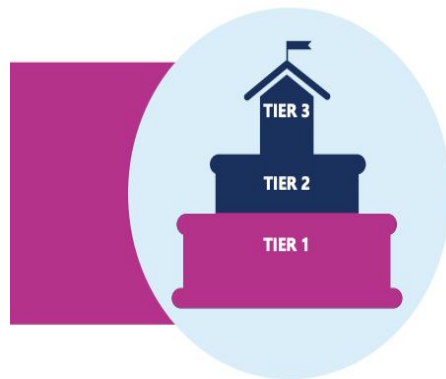
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) offers a comprehensive framework for school and district improvement grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles (CAST, 2024) that enables schools to support every learner.
- A framework that drives systemic change across all levels to address both **academic** and **non-academic** needs for every learner (including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and advanced learners).
- It involves creating a continuum of evidence-based practices, using regular observation and data to guide instructional decisions.
- Founded on the principle that **all students** can succeed academically when given timely, targeted, and appropriate instruction.

Key Components of MTSS

What is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?

Tier 1 (Universal)

- All students engage in ***high-quality, inclusive, universally designed grade-level instruction***.
- This foundational tier includes universal screening, consistent progress monitoring, and preventative skill-building across the four MTSS domains supported by clear expectations and practices for all staff.
 - School belonging
 - Academic Success
 - Social-Emotional Development
 - Health & Wellness
- Tier 1 doesn't mean that all students get the ***same experience***. It does mean that ***all students*** have access to high-quality, grade-level learning.



Key Components of MTSS



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What is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?

Tier 2 (Targeted Interventions)

- Students who need **additional** support to achieve grade level expectations for specific skills.
- Students who need **beyond-grade level and accelerated** opportunities and receive structured support related to specific needs.
- Tiers 2 should complement, reinforce, and supplement, **not supplant**, Tier 1.
- Supports are additive and build on each other based on the student's strengths and needs.



Key Components of MTSS

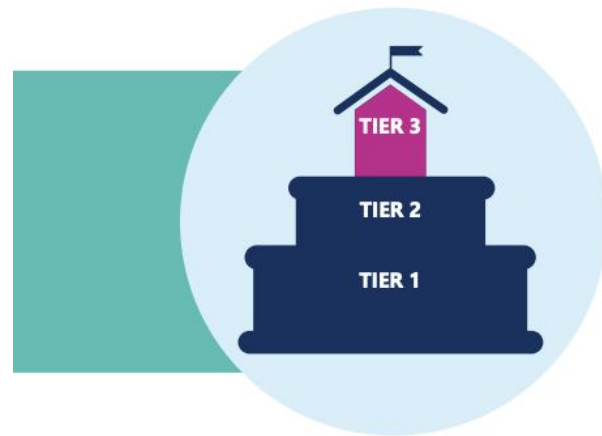


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What is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?

Tier 3 (Intensive Interventions)

- Students with significant and/or persistent needs, or students with beyond-grade level learning needs.
- Students receive highly individualized and intensive support.
- Tier 3 should complement, reinforce, and supplement, **not supplant**, Tier 1.
- Supports are additive and build on each other based on the student's strengths and needs.



Key Components of MTSS

Key tenets of the MTSS framework include:

- MTSS is rooted in proactivity and prevention.
- The system utilizes evidence-based practices.
- Decisions and procedures are driven by school and student data.
- The degree of support given to students is based on their needs.
- Implementation occurs school-wide.
- All students are capable of grade-level learning with adequate support.

Key Takeaways

- MTSS offers a tiered system of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional support, to meet student specific needs.
- The intensity of help increases with a student's needs.
- MTSS is structured as a multi-tiered framework, that is built on a foundation of evidence-based, culturally sustaining practices designed for all learners.
- While every student has access to the core Tier 1 instruction, additional Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are provided as needed.
- These higher tiers offer more intensive intervention but are always in addition to, never instead of, the foundational Tier 1 instruction.
- Tiers are not a location!



Key Components of MTSS



MTSS is Not a Gatekeeper for Special Education or Section 504! MTSS strengthens instruction and intervention but does not override legal responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

- No Delay: Schools cannot use tiered interventions or screening to delay or deny an evaluation for a suspected disability. Under IDEA, schools have an ongoing “Child Find” duty. Parents can request special education evaluations anytime, and schools must respond promptly without delay, regardless of MTSS participation. Under Section 504, schools must evaluate students who may need accommodations due to a disability, without delay or prerequisite MTSS interventions or processes.

Please see the APS MTSS Plan for more information.

Key Components of MTSS

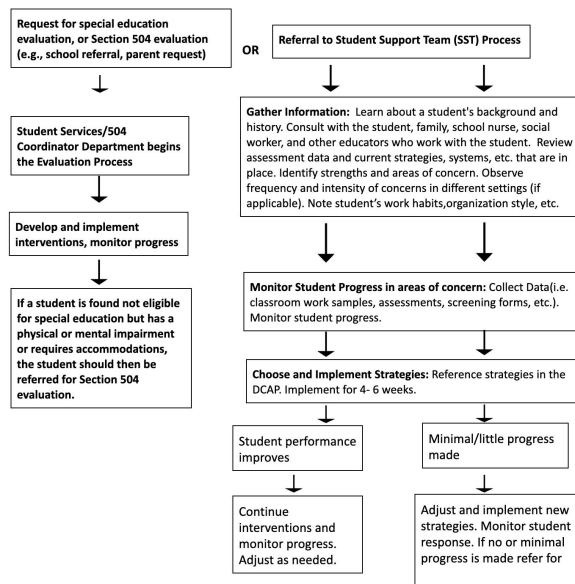


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MTSS is Not a Gatekeeper for Special Education or Section 504! MTSS strengthens instruction and intervention but does not override legal responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

SST/Evaluation Process Chart

If a student is experiencing challenges with: Academics, Executive Functioning/Organization, Communication, and/or Social Emotional or Behavioral Functioning, please refer to the following procedure.





Tiers are not a location!

Multi-Tiered System of Support

MTSS gives all
students
what they need
when they need it





Turn and Talk!

If you apply this analogy to your setting, what are the implications?

- For you, in your role?
- Our School Teams (ILT, SST, Grade level, content-based, ACE, etc)?
- School wide schedules, policies, etc.?





What is the DCAP?

[\(APS MTSS Plan, Pg. 16\)](#)

DCAP

- The state-mandated District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) aligns with the MA Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Blueprint.
- Purpose is to equip educators with the resources and expectations to provide high-quality, inclusive instruction.
- The DCAP serves as a guide for implementing culturally responsive curricula, interventions, and accommodations that meet the diverse needs of all learners in the general education classroom, ensuring access to rigorous learning opportunities for every student.

Key Takeaways - DCAP



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The APS DCAP addresses the following components:

- Strategies for supporting diverse learning styles in the general education classroom.
- Accommodations tailored to address varied learning needs in an inclusive setting.
- Interventions for students whose behavior impacts their learning.



Key Takeaways - DCAP

- Shares tiered classroom instruction and structures that supports students at each level, Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III.
- Shares accommodations and interventions.
- Aligned with the pillars of the APS Strategic Plan and the Massachusetts Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Blueprint.
- Provides APS educators with:
 - Expectations for high-quality, grade-level Tier I instruction
 - In-class supports and interventions for students
 - A guide for supporting students receiving services in various tiers and in different instructional areas (Tier 2 and Tier 3 resources)
 - Structures that support students at various levels
 - Expectations for the Student Support Team process

Key Takeaways - DCAP



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While the DCAP provides research-based practices, example strategies, and actionable options to guide staff in selecting appropriate supports, it is not exhaustive. Teachers and collaborating professionals retain full flexibility to employ additional accommodations tailored to each student's unique needs.

Next Steps

***MTSS Working Group will continue to update the MTSS Plan (and the DCAP),
being sure to prioritize:***

- Providing critical support structures, including guidance on collaboration time, professional development, and a defined assessment system.
- Highlighting resources for educators, including student support, mentoring, differentiation strategies, professional development, and coaching.
- Offering a reference list of accommodations to address varied student needs.
- Reviewing current MTSS systems and structures and refining as needed
- Strategies for engaging parents/guardians through input and collaboration.
- Building an online library of resources.

Closing



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- What is 1 piece of new information that you learned today?
- What is 1 thing that you want to learn more about as a result of today's session?

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Resources



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- [MTSS in APS](#)
- [Multi-Tiered System of Support A Blueprint for Massachusetts Educators: A Blueprint for Massachusetts Educators](#)
- SST Process ([APS SST Process and Referral Form](#))
- [Tiers are not a location!](#)



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

School Quality Plan-Update on Presentation Plan



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Old Business



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

New Business



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Adjournment (L. Exton)